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## **Combating Epidemics in Belarus by The Ara, 1922-1923**

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### **Abstract:**

The thesis of this joint article is that the methods to contain and combat epidemics racking Belarus in 1922 and 1923 were similar to the methods used against COVID-19 during 2020 and also that government policies as well as wars negatively impacted the pharmaceutical sector of the USSR. The authors focus on both the proximate causes of the epidemics—mammoth population movements—but also the fundamental causes of the epidemics—wars and misguided government policies. They document how broken trade links resulting from World War I and the war between Belarus and Poland that followed the First World War negatively affected the pharmaceutical sector. Additionally, they emphasize that shortages of pharmaceuticals, including soap and disinfectants, bathing and laundry facilities, clothing, and decent food needed to contain and combat the infectious diseases in Belarus in 1922 -1923 resulted from the political instability of the Civil War in Belarus, the policy of War Communism mandated during that war to help the Bolsheviks win, and the unintended consequences of the quasi-market economy of the New Economic Policy that was inaugurated at the end of the Civil War in 1921. The authors show that Belarusian officials implemented measures to contain and combat the epidemics but, bereft of many necessities, Belarusian authorities requested assistance from the American Relief Association. American assistance was crucial to the effort to improve public health in Belarus. Emigration recruiting, thank-you notes from Belarusians, and ancillary political issues are briefly mentioned.

**Keywords:** Belarus; epidemics, 1922-1923; American Relief Association; World War I, Civil War, War Communism; NEP; Borderlands of Imperial Russia; Periphery of the Soviet Union, Early Soviet-American relations

### **1. Introduction**

In the summer of 1921, having successfully completed child feeding in war-torn Europe, Herbert Hoover's American Relief Association answered the pleas of Maxim Gorky and Patriarch Tikhon to succor famine sufferers in the Volga region, Ukraine and North Caucasus of the nascent Soviet Union. In addition to helping the needy, Hoover hoped that American efficiency would prove that capitalism was superior to Communism and, with Lenin's proclamation of the New Economic Policy in March 1921, re-open the vast Russian market to American businesses.<sup>1</sup> Bertrand Patenaude's monumental *The Big Show in Bololand* (Stanford 2002) has magisterially chronicled the ARA's work in Moscow and in the eastern and southern provinces of European Russia—the famine regions of the new Soviet Union in 1922 and 1923. His tome's 815 pages vividly portray the commitment, tribulations, and escapades of ARA workers, their confrontations with Communist officials, and the gratitude of Soviet citizens in this early period of American-Soviet relations.

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<sup>1</sup>Williams, William Appleman. *Russian-American Relations, 1781-1947* (New York: Octagon Books, 1971), 148-154, 160-166, 170-178, 200, 222.

There was no famine in Belarus in 1922 and 1923, a new Soviet Socialist Republic on the northwestern edge of the newly formed Soviet Union and neighbor to the new post-World War I state of Latvia and the resurrected states of Lithuania and Poland. However, Belarus was racked with epidemics in 1922 and 1923 and ARA doctors toiled mightily, alongside local officials and various foreign organizations, to combat them. This story—significant in medical history and in early Soviet-American relations as well—has been given scant attention in English-language books and articles.

Current medical historians have been gripped by the similarity between the measures to fight the influenza pandemic of 1918, 1919 and those employed to fight COVID-19—although the measures undertaken by ARA doctors to contain the epidemics of typhus, typhoid, dysentery, cholera, malaria, smallpox, and other infectious diseases in Belarus in 1922-1923 were equally similar to modern efforts to cope with the COVID-19 pandemic.

Although Belarus was the entry point for ARA provisions to alleviate the famine, since shortage of food in general was of no consequence, Patenaude understandably devotes only a few pages to Belarus—specifically to the conflict between ARA workers and Communist officials. Aleksandr Lukashuk's prize winning book, *Prygody ARA u Belarusi* (Adventures of the ARA in Belarus), (Radye Svobodnaia Europa, Radio Free Europe - 2005), based on ARA reports in the Hoover Institute, details the situation in Belarus in 1922 and 1923. The book—initially available only in Belarusian—has only been translated into Russian—belatedly, but not English and is difficult to obtain.

Indeed, in general, while the history of Russia and the Soviet Union has currency amongst literate English speakers, most Americans have only scattered references to Belarus. The Soviet republic of Belarus was formed in 1918 of five provinces of Imperial Russia, namely Minsk, Mogilev, Vitebsk, Gomel', and Grodno. In Imperial Russia these provinces—plus Vilna and Kovno, that represented Lithuania and parts of Poland after the dissolution of the Lithuanian-Polish Commonwealth in the eighteenth century—comprised the northern section of the Jewish Pale of Settlement. Jews amounted to almost half the population of Minsk, according to Elissa Bemporad, whose book is cited below. Since the ancestors of many Jewish-Americans emigrated from towns in these provinces, since art-loving Americans are familiar with Marc Chagall, Yahuda Pen, Nadezhda Chodasiewicz-Leger, Chaim Soutine, Sam Zarfin, and Osip Liubich—Belarusians who dazzled Paris and then the world in the first half of the twentieth century,<sup>2</sup> and since the current president of Belarus, Alexander Lukashenka, dominates American news these days, Belarus resonates to some extent with contemporary Americans. The Chernobyl catastrophe brought Belarus to the attention of medical specialists and ecologists. Kate Brown's *Manual for Survival* (New York, 2019) has rekindled interest in the effects of the Chernobyl disaster. Political Science majors might recall that the Russian Social Democratic Labor Party was formed in Minsk in 1898. Otherwise, to repeat, most Americans remain only vaguely familiar with the political, economic, and social history of Belarus, not to mention medical/pharmaceutical developments.

A number of excellent histories are available to fill in the gaps. One key item to remember is that Belarus, was multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-confessional. It was home to Catholic Poles and Lithuanians, Christian Germans and Latvians, and Muslim Tatars—as well as to Jews. Theodore Weeks's *Nation and State in Imperial Russia: Nationalism and Russification on the Western Frontier, 1863-1914* (Northern Illinois University Press, 1996) has thoroughly and sensitively plumbed and portrayed the complexity and heterogeneity of the Belarusian and the Lithuanian and Polish provinces of Imperial Russia, the relationship between Jews and Western and Orthodox Christians, their interaction with the central government in St. Petersburg, and the government's policies toward these border peoples. Peter Gatrell's *The Whole World Walking* has publicized the plight of the inhabitants of Belarus and Ukraine during World War I. While the interior provinces of Imperial Russia were not invaded in the Great War, Belarus was in the thick of it and the migration of millions of people from the western borderland eastward in 1915 and 1916—either voluntarily because of fear of German and Austrian armies or involuntarily because of the scorched-earth mandates of Russian Generals like N. N. Ianushkevich—inaugurated the epidemics that escalated in 1922 and 1923. For example, in September 1915 twenty thousand refugees, some infected with cholera, reached Pinsk; alarmed city authorities tried to keep them out but planned to build a special cholera hospital.

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<sup>2</sup>Schastnyi, Vladimir. *Khudozhniki Parizhskoi shkoly iz Belarusi*, (Minsk: Izdatel'stvo Chetyrechetverti, 2012), and exhibit in Minsk Art Museum, 2014.

Gatrell notes that typhus also was rife amongst the refugees.<sup>3</sup>Elissa Bemporad's *Becoming Soviet Jews: The Jewish Experiment in Minsk* (Indiana University Press, 2013) focuses solely on the lives of Jews in the city of Minsk, the capital of the new state of Belarus, in the decade following the Bolshevik revolution of 1917. She examines the Jewish psyche as well as the physical and cultural situation for Jews, comparing their lot in the new Soviet Union with conditions beforehand. She discusses the "Evseksiia" or Jewish section of the Communist Party, the work of the American-Jewish Committee, and the medical activities of Jewish doctors. But, although she cites Bolshevik requisitioning of Jewish businesses and American Jewish visitors' comments on the poverty of Minsk Jews in 1922 and 1923, both of which offset some of their advancement under the Soviet administration, she does not mention the epidemics that raged or the ARA and refers to American-Jewish relief work in one paragraph.

This article, by a Belarusian and an American pharmaceutical historian, based primarily on material from the Hoover Archives, Stanford, California, and Belarusian archives, analyzes the causes of the epidemics in Belarus in the early 1920s and the efforts of Belarusian and ARA workers to grapple with them in an attempt to shed more light on health care and on the economic and social policies in the early Soviet Union, as well as on early Soviet-American relations. The parallels with attempts to defeat COVID-19 are obvious.

## **2. Proximate Causes of the Public Health Crisis in Belarus in 1922 and 1923**

With fertile soil like that in Illinois, although Belarus was recovering from six years of war, there was plenty of food in the markets and cattle herds had nearly reached pre-war levels.<sup>4</sup> However, the new state, with a population, fluctuating between 1.5 and 4.2 million, was overwhelmed by hundreds of thousands of transients and refugees.<sup>5</sup> The original cohort arriving via railways, wagons or on foot, consisted of people fleeing—or compelled by the Tsarist government to flee—when German armies took over Poland in the fall of 1915, occupied much of Belarus in 1916 and returned again in March 1918 following the Peace of Brest-Litovsk. Some refugees had moved eastward but 2.3 million were estimated to be still residing in Belarus.<sup>6</sup> A second wave of migrants consisted of POWs being repatriated from Germany plus former citizens of the Russian Empire returning to the Motherland from the United States. For example, Dr. Stackelberg, Belarusian Railway Physician hired by the ARA, noted in July 1922 that 8,000 to 10,000 Russian prisoners of war were expected to be returning from Berlin and 20,000 political evacuees from Latvia plus "reemigrants" [sic] from America "were" further "expected." In addition, many Letts were returning from Ukraine where they had worked during the war. A third group of transients was comprised of POWs from Western countries "still arriving from Siberia" as well as national minorities waiting to leave the USSR for the newly independent countries of Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and points west.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Gatrell, Peter. *The Whole World Walking: Refugees in Russia during World War I* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), pp. 3, 54, 81 and passim.

<sup>4</sup>Dr. Donald Hardy, Monthly Report August 31, 1922, [American Relief Association Records, Hoover Institute, Stanford, CA—as are all doctor's reports following] Box 182, Folder 1, Microfilm Reel 238, slide 000164; Dr. Ralf Herz, November 4, 1922 Report, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240; Statistics on cattle went through 1922, May 27, 1923 Report, page 2 "Vitebsk", Boxes 147-148, Folder 7, Reel 193, slides 000245. Page 1 of this report did note that in 1923 a caterpillar had destroyed peas, beans, cabbages, and potatoes—the food of the lower classes. Further, rations to government employees and children had stopped.

<sup>5</sup>Statistics from Urban, Paul. "Byelorussian Political Activities and the Establishment of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic," in Kipel and Kipel, 1988, 179-203 quoted in Marples, David. *Belarus* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1996), notes 37 and 38, 140-141. Marples comments that territories considered by Belarusians to be "ethnically Belarusian" may have comprised 12 million people; however, sizable portions were excised from the Republic in treaties, such as the 1921 Treaty of Riga that gave Grodno to Poland—until Stalin retrieved the region in September 1939. Because of the unstable borders some Belarusian sources cite population figures of 6, 700,000 in 1922.

<sup>6</sup>Skalaban, V. U. "Refugees." *Entsiklopediia istorii Belarusi v 6 tomakh*. (Encyclopedia of the History of Belarus in 6 volumes). Pashkov, G. P. (chief editor) (Minsk, 1999), 339-340. See also, Gatrell, *A Whole Empire Walking*, 20-25 and A. S. Tumanova, *Obshchestvennye organizatsii Rossii v gody Pervoimirovoivoiny (1914-fevral' 1917g. (Public Organizations in Russia during the First World War)* (Moscow: Rosspen, 2014), 195-246.

<sup>7</sup>"Visit of Inspection accompanied by Dr. Stackelberg of Railway Dept. NKZ," [hereafter cited Dr. Stackelberg], July 13, 1922, pp. 1, 3-4, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slides 000258-000272. Amongst national minorities waiting to leave were German colonists from Saratov.

In November 1920,300,000 had moved through Minsk to Poland; by the end of 1922,430,000 more had done so.<sup>8</sup>Refugees from the famine regions formed the fourth group of migrants.Belarusian “Evak” authorities reported that 101,000 migrants had been *registered* during the first half of 1922 butestimated that “an equal number pass through without registration.”<sup>9</sup>

These unfortunates, camping in railway stations,their wagons andsome“in dugouts deep in the earth,”<sup>10</sup>without adequate bathing and laundry facilities, wearing the clothes on their backsfor months on end were “a menace to the local population...virtual disease carriers, especially of typhus,”ARA DoctorDonald Hardy emphasized.<sup>11</sup> “[I]lice-borne diseases remain everywhere...especially relapsing,” Dr. Stackelbergseconded. Additionally, he warned, “Water supplyis everywhere bad, and the canalization worse.”The polluted rivers he described, mitigated only in some places by artesian wells,combined withfilthy toilets and latrines, spawned typhoid fever,dysentery, and cholera.<sup>12</sup>Insufficient food lowered immunity, making the migrants susceptible totuberculosis.There were flares of malaria, endemic and often epidemic in Russia and the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup>

Many children lived in pitiful circumstances.Several thousand orphans were packed into children’s homes. Some of the homes were tidybut the food was often meager, and the vast majority slept two and three to a bed or on the floorwithout sheets or blankets,underwear, and sleepwear.They lacked shoes—some trudging barefoot in the snow or wearing only thin bast slippers.<sup>14</sup>They lacked towels and soap and,bathing infrequently,suffered from scabies—as Dr. Frank Whele observed in Minsk, Smolensk, Gomel’, and Vitebsk in October 1922.<sup>15</sup>

Life for permanent adult residentswas scarcely better than for the refugees. Factories barely operated or operated not at all. The ARA doctors noted that many shops and stores were shuttered.<sup>16</sup>“Workless” Jews decried government seizure of their schools and other institutions.<sup>17</sup>Dwellings varied from town to town but the majority were ramshackle, dirty and overcrowded.<sup>18</sup>“Sanitary appliances”and electric lighting were inadequate; all heating was done with wood—which was scarce and expensive.

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<sup>8</sup>GosudarstvennyiarkhivMinskoioblasti, [GAMO] Fond 320, opis’ 1, delo 45, list 71.

<sup>9</sup>Dr. Hardy, September 1, 1922Report, pp. 4-5, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slides000229-000230.Material in the Belarusian archives stated that from January, 1921 to April 1922, 251, 734 refugees had passed through the Minsk railway station and in May 1922 4,000 refugees from four famine-stricken *gubernii*(provinces)--Ekaterinoslav, Smolensk, Saratov, and Tula—had passed through the Minsk railway station. GAMO, f. 320, o. 1, d. 45, l.71.

<sup>10</sup>“...some 200 refugees from the Volga...established themselves at the outskirts of town...built dugouts deep in the earth—are still living there today.”Vitebsk, Boxes 147-148, Folder 7, May 24, 1923, Reel 193, slide 000246.

<sup>11</sup>Dr. Hardy, September 1 Report, *ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>12</sup> Dr. Stackelberg, July 13, 1922 Report, re lice-borne diseases, Drissa and Sebej, p. 5; bad water supply in general but good in Vitebsk plus water-borne diseases, *ibid.*, pp. 5-7.Also, supplement to August 1922 Report, Borisov, Box 184, Reel 240, slide000235.

<sup>13</sup>Dr. Stackelberg, *ibid.*, notes malaria.For the history of this disease in Russia see Conroy, M. S. “Malaria in Late Tsarist Russia,” *Bulletin of the History of Medicine*, 56, no. 1, 1982, 41-55.

<sup>14</sup> “In the Spirit of Ancient Sparta,” Minsk *Zvezda*, no. 22, February 8, 1923, Box 33, Reel 48 described a child sick with trachoma trudging barefoot in the snow. “FirstLeather Shoes,” Minsk *Zvezda*, March 1-15, 1923, Box 33, Reel 48, recounted the thrill of an “eight-year-old child from Samara in the Volga Region wearing woven bark shoes with the temperature” at “10 degrees below zero”. The child had come to Belarus as a refugee two years ago. “His bark sandals were removed and his feet were measured. He was given a pair of shoes from America...to him a dream.”

<sup>15</sup>Dr. Whele’s Report for October 1922, undated on the microfilm reel but neara report for October 11, 1922 in Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slide 000157. Alan Ball, *And Now My Soul is Hardened* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), states that in the summer of 1925, the Belorussian [sic] Republic supported 38 *detdoma* or children’s homes (282, note 27) , housing 4, 395 children, ( 283, note 29). Dr. Stackelberg, July 13, 1922, pp. 6(Drissa, Sebej), 7 (Gomel’), 12 (Kozirova) notes diseases of scabies and fauvus.

<sup>16</sup>ARA Report May 27, 1923, “Vitebsk,” Boxes 147-148, Folder 7, Reel 193, slides 000244-000245.

<sup>17</sup>Letter fromformer Jewish teacher LavikMendelesevich, Minsk, Box 33, Reel 48.

<sup>18</sup>Dr. Hardy, July 31, 1922 Report, Box 182, Reel 238, slide 000164; Dr. Herz, November 4, 1922 Report, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240. AlsoReport on Minsk for April 1922, Box 184, Folder 2, page 3, Reel 240, slide 000337.

Hygienic amenities were available in some towns but few in others.<sup>19</sup> For example, Ijobin [Zhlobin] near Gomel', with 9,000 mainly Jewish inhabitants and rife with epidemics and tuberculosis, had no public baths and depended on the railroad for hospitalization. Railway employees in Ijobin had their own bath but refused to share it with other residents. Baths in some other Belarusian towns were reserved for the military or used only infrequently because they charged high prices for adults—though not for children.<sup>20</sup>

In sum, the abundance of food notwithstanding, Belarus was in the throes of a public health crisis. Money was not available to gather adequate disease and mortality statistics.<sup>21</sup> But in Minsk alone during the last three months of 1921 and the first three of 1922, typhus cases totaled 11,707 with 500 deaths; recurring fever cases amounted to 21,756 with 827 deaths; typhoid and paratyphoid cases amounted to 2,639 with 119 deaths and 1,952 with 184 deaths, respectively; dysentery totaled 1,247 cases with 121 deaths, and scarlet fever cases amounted to 1,746 with 106 deaths. Fortunately, cholera, variola [smallpox], and erysipelas were less prevalent.<sup>22</sup>

### **3. Belarusians', Americans,' and Other Philanthropists' Attempts to Restore Public Health**

#### **3.1 ARA Staff**

The mission of the ARA contingents in Belarus from January 1922 through June 18, 1923 was to alleviate and, if possible, solve the public health crisis. Charles Willoughby and Dr. Donald Hardy set up headquarters in Minsk. They hired about 100 locals, according to Alexander Lukashuk. John Maitland organized an ARA branch in Gomel' in southeastern Belarus. John Acker and Raymond Brandt's ARA office was in Vitebsk,<sup>23</sup> erstwhile home of Marc Chagall, Yahuda Pen and Nadia Leger. Belarusian archives detail two qualified pharmacists hired on: German Reiman, was born in Riga, graduated from Iur'ev (now Tartu) University in Estland, managed a pharmacy in eastern Ukraine before the war, served in the Red Army, managed a nationalized pharmacy in Odessa, and was a refugee in Minsk, waiting to emigrate to Latvia when he worked for the ARA through spring 1923. Yakov Polyak had managed a pharmacy for a benevolent association in Grodno, served in the Imperial Russian Army, and worked for the ARA only three months. He was terminated ostensibly for redundancy but perhaps for tsarist military connections.<sup>24</sup> Ironically, pharmacies were not involved in the dispensing of medicines and disinfectants ordered by the ARA because, those remaining had been privatized as a result of the New Economic Policy. Managers of pharmacies now had to make a profit and the Riga Agreement of 1921 that governed the ARA's work forbade the selling of humanitarian items. However, in Bobruisk *uezd* (district) a medical commission headed by B. L. Gel'fand assisted the ARA in distributing pharmaceuticals and medical products.<sup>25</sup>

ARA physicians--Dr. Hardy, Dr. Whele, and Dr. Herz, the Belarusian physician Dr. Stackelberg, and Belarusian inspectors hired by the ARA, worked tirelessly to eliminate the public health problems and also to improve the lives of Belarusian children and old, infirm, and unemployed adults. Each month they supplied hundreds of hospitals and children's homes with essential items ordered from abroad.

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<sup>19</sup>Dr. Hardy, *ibid*; Dr. Hardy Report for August, September 1, 1922, p. 1, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slide 000225.

<sup>20</sup>Report on Minsk, April 1, 1922: "population [160,000] on the whole infected with lice...Bathing facilities inadequate...great scarcity of soap and wood. Two public bath houses...very dirty and small." Box 184, Folder 2, p. 3, Reel 240, slide 000337. Dr. Stackelberg gave information about baths in the many towns he visited—including payment and provisions for special groups in his 14-page report for July 13, 1922, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slides 000258-000272. [Ijobin, specifically, page 8]

<sup>21</sup>"Monthly Medical and Sanitary Report," p. 4, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slide 000509.

<sup>22</sup>Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slide 000343.

<sup>23</sup>Lukashuk, *Prygody ARA u Belarusi* .

<sup>24</sup>Natsional'nyi arkhiv Respublika Belarusi [NARB], f. 16, op. 1, d. 13, ll. 67, 69. On Polyak's pre-war work in Grodno, *Pamiatnayak nishka Grodnenskoigubernii 1910*, 40 and *Ibid.*, 1912, 41. Although the archives state Polyak was fired for "staff reductions," Lukashuk has theorized that many ARA staff were fired because of "ideological "cleansing" by Soviet authorities.

<sup>25</sup>NARB, f. 16, op. 1, d. 6, ll. 38-39, 75-77.

Their reports give insights into the practices of containing and combatting epidemics in the early 1920s—two decades before sulfa drugs and antibiotics were available—by Belarusians and Americans working separately and in tandem.

This last point needs elaboration for, although ARA doctors and laymen were on a humanitarian mission, were forbidden to discuss political issues, and had been invited by Bolshevik Belarusian authorities and Bolsheviks in Moscow, nevertheless these same officials kept a close watch on ARA activities. The medical reports of the ARA doctors in Belarus included conflicts over ARA supplies, ARA autos, and other matters. Both Patenaude and Lukashuk, cited above, have detailed the tension and periodical bouts of conflict between the ARA and Communist bureaucrats. Thus, they will not be discussed in this article except to note that the chief agency supervising the ARA doctors was the Evacuation Commission, headed by Mar'yanStakovskii, a plenipotentiary representative of the governments of Belarus and the RSFSR, assisted by a six-man directory in Minsk. The “Evak” commission had originally been formed to handle the refugee problem but its function was enlarged to “supervise the activity of foreign organizations.”<sup>26</sup> In fairness, it also should be noted that there were moments of harmony between Belarusian officials and ARA doctors as well as enormous gratitude accorded to the American doctors by the citizens of Belarus.

The weapons available in 1922 and 1923 against the epidemics raging in Belarus were four: isolation and quarantine; vaccines to prevent some of the infectious diseases; good hygiene—soap and disinfectants, bathing and laundry facilities; and for the seriously ill—well-stocked hospitals and clinics. Upon their arrival ARA physicians found that Belarusian authorities had implemented some of these options and measures. However, others were barely discernible.

### **3.2 Efforts to Contain Epidemics by Belarusian Officials**

#### **3.2.1. Quarantine Camps**

The main weapon wielded by Belarusian health authorities in *Narkomzdrav* (the Commissariat of Health) and *Gub-* and *Gorzdravs* (provincial and city health departments) to contain the infectious diseases were isolation in *Isopropunkty*, located near railway stations or in Infectious Diseases Hospitals, and quarantine in camps established in vacated army bases.

Dr. Stackelberg gave a detailed survey of the camps in his July 13, 1922 Report. They varied in quality. For example, that at Veliki-Luki, was “one of the best.” It was used for “repatries” waiting to emigrate and POWs who had just returned from Germany—500 at a time. The camp included barracks, kitchen, laundry, and bath. There were separate quarters for men and women—even a library. The families waiting to emigrate were healthy, most of the adults worked on the [railway] line. The Doctor in charge had a small hospital of 20 beds. All echelons were bathed and vaccinated before entering. The main feeding point could handle 2,000 per day, there were “stocks of food until October,” clothing and “extras”. The “Evak” situation in Vitebsk was not as good. “Repatries” to Poland, Latvia and Lithuania were waiting but Lithuania was refusing to accept them. There were still 5,000 famine refugees in Polotsk, Orsha and other villages. Some lived in barracks, others in town. Although baths were available the local doctor complained that “the situation has never been so bad—typhus and relapsing fever remain epidemic.” Typhoid was “little,” there were a few cases of malaria, children’s infections were not excessive—but there was “a good deal of enteritis and dysentery” was “expected.” Further, “vaccinations” had “not gone well.” In Gomel’ there were about 600 inmates in the camp and also famine victims in barracks “with small rooms—thus easier to keep clean.” There were kitchens so the isolated could cook on their own. The barracks at Bolosk [did the hired typist mean Polotsk?], on the other hand, “were not very clean and no official steps seem to have been taken to stamp out the epidemics in the place.” There was “individual cooking” but “the children” had “gone away to beg.” “The authorities” did “not interfere...the doctor in charge of the Railway isolation hospital in the barracks” did “what he could” but was “short of drugs and supplies.” The hospital had 100 beds —“about 40” were “in use for cases of relapsing, typhus, dysentery and enteritis” The hospital was “very old” and “short of drugs, linen, etc.” In contrast, the refugee camp at Kozirova, outside Minsk, described by Dr. Whele, as well as Dr. Stackelberg, was a showplace for 3,000 inmates--mainly Polish, German and Russian. It “was well situated on open ground with gravel soil.

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<sup>26</sup> NARB, f. 16, op. 1, d. 1, ll. 35, 57, 108.

There were three large barracks. The bathing facilities"—Russian saunas—"were not yet finished" but the kitchens were "excellent." There were separate tents for those wishing to stay in the open air.<sup>27</sup>

### **3.2.2. Bacteriological Institute, medical school, selected meals, imports of medicine and vaccines**

The Belarussian government also established a Bacteriological Institute in Minsk in 1920 but it needed chemicals, dyes and microscopes.<sup>28</sup> The new University in Minsk, with a student body of 1,390—30 % peasants, 11% workers, 39 % Soviet employees, and 20 % "other" --included a Medical Department.<sup>29</sup> The government in Minsk managed some clinics,<sup>30</sup> refurbished the State Hospital in Minsk,<sup>31</sup> provided some meals for college students and workers,<sup>32</sup> received 35 [inflated] milliards worth of medicines from Germany in January 1923,<sup>33</sup> and in February 1923, in response to outbreaks of smallpox in the villages around Minsk, the Minsk *Uzdrav* (*uezdor* district health Department) sent a special courier to Moscow and issued 50,000 portions of smallpox vaccine free of charge.<sup>34</sup>

### **3.2.3. Children's Homes**

With regard to children, in February Minsk *Zvezda* averred that Minsk *Gubzdrav* (the City Health Department) gave out 316, 703 prescriptions free of charge and the Central Children's Dispensary had cared for 55, 345 children in 1922.<sup>35</sup> Some of the municipal children's homes were former Jewish institutions. Workers' unions also founded children's homes. The Belarus Commissariat of Education operated seven homes for 328 children in Borisov, 15 versts from Minsk.<sup>36</sup> The model Borisov Colony for Children housed "34 kids, aged 8-16, all orphans," on a confiscated private estate. It is noteworthy that "the kids" took care of the 200 apple trees and animals on the estate. But even this colony—and others less impressive—like that run by the Chemical Workers' Union--had shortages of crucial items and needed help from the ARA.<sup>37</sup> In October 1922 Dr. Whele visited 28 children's homes in Minsk housing 1,719 children, 4 homes in Smolensk caring for 256 children, 15 in Gomel housing 1,500 children, and 23 in Vitebsk housing 1,174 children and commented on general lack of beds, linen, and clothing.<sup>38</sup>

## **3.3 Help from Foreign Organizations**

Some outside organizations assisted Belarussian authorities. The German Red Cross attended to German refugees waiting to leave Belarus.<sup>39</sup> As noted, the Joint Jewish Committee addressed the needs of Jews.<sup>40</sup> A Quaker organization provided some general assistance. The Red Cross had assisted but was pulling out of Belarus in 1922.<sup>41</sup> Relatives of Belarussians also sent food packages through the ARA to their kin.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Stackelberg, July 13, 1922 Report, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slides 000258-000272. Dr. Whele, July 15, 1922, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slides 000301-000303

<sup>28</sup> "Back From Trip to West," July 18, 1922, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slide 000257.

<sup>29</sup> Box 184, Reel 240, slide 000056.

<sup>30</sup> Minsk *Zvezda*, no. 299, "Movement of the Sick," December 31, 1922, Box 33, Folder 10, Reel 48.

<sup>31</sup> Minsk *Zvezda*, no. 10, January 13, 1923, Box 33, Folder 10, Reel 48.

<sup>32</sup> Minsk *Zvezda*, January 1923, Box 33, Folder 10, Reel 48.

<sup>33</sup> Minsk *Zvezda*, January 14, 1923, Box 33, Folder 8, Reel 48.

<sup>34</sup> Minsk *Zvezda*, no. 47, February 27, 1933, Box 33, Folder 7, Reel 48.

<sup>35</sup> "Pomoshch' detiam," (Help to Children), Extract from Minsk *Zvezda*, no. 29, February 6, 1923, Box 33, Folder 8, Reel 48.

<sup>36</sup> Inspector Roumiantsoff, Reports, January 15-31, 1923, Box 33, Reel 48; Roumiantsoff, January 15, 16, 19, Box 33, Reel 48.

<sup>37</sup> Inspector Roumiantsoff, *ibid.*, and January 22. 1923 Report, Box 33, Folder 8, Reel 48.

<sup>38</sup> See note 13, above.

<sup>39</sup> Dr. Hardy, September 1, 1922 Report, Box 184, Folder 2, p. 2, Reel 240, slide 000226.

<sup>40</sup> "Child Feeding," January 1-15, 1923, Box 33, Folder 10, Reel 48. The article referred to the "Home for Jewish Children" on Moskovskaya Street no. 17 that housed 48 kids, 4-8 years old. Admittance was by the Jewish Section of the City Education Department. However, the city of Minsk had taken over the home.

<sup>41</sup> Dr. Stackelberg, July 13, 1922, on page 2 he noted that the Red Cross had liquidated their "good 1913" hospital in Veliki-Luki that was capable of housing 200, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, 000259.

### **3.4. Specific Items Needed to Contain and Combat Epidemics—and their availability**

#### **3.4.1. Vaccines**

In addition to isolation and quarantine, vaccines were needed to prevent outbreaks. Vaccines were produced against typhoid, dysentery, and cholera in Imperial Russian the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>43</sup> In Belarus in 1922 and 1923, though, only smallpox vaccine appeared to be available.

#### **3.4.2. Soap and disinfectants**

Soap and disinfectants--such as Lysol, lye, chlorinate, formaldehyde,<sup>44</sup> iodine<sup>45</sup>--and bathing and laundry facilities were crucial to combating typhus, in particular, but were also needed to contain the food- and water-borne diseases of typhoid, dysentery, and cholera. These were shockingly deficit in Belarus in 1922 and 1923.

#### **3.4.3. Hospitals, clinics, pharmacies, bathing & laundry facilities**

Finally, febrifuges and well-stocked hospitals and clinics were needed to treat those with high fevers and other serious symptoms of the infectious diseases. Tragically, hospitals and pharmacies were in precarious shape. "I have never seen hospitals, dispensaries and other institutions so bereft of all essentials so far as medical, surgical and hospital supplies are concerned, as I have seen here," Dr. Hardy lamented in September 1, 1922, following inspections in Bobruisk, Slutsk, Gomel', Mogilev, and Igumen. "One of the hospitals of the most dire need... is Bobruisk. There is a very good surgeon there... his average is three major operations a day... he has not sufficient gauze, iodine, has had no gloves for five years, no catgut for an equal period. He uses broken flax as a substitute for cotton and linen thread for catgut... and scrubs with three sterile brushes." ARA doctors--and Soviet Belarusian Inspector Roumiantsoff, as well--noted that hospitals lacked rubber sheets, gowns, slippers, and blankets for patients-- who had to pay for their food-- and advised "cutting the number of hospitals... so those that remain are better equipped." Hardy also requested 2,000 blankets for the hospital staff--although some ignored patients who appeared to be failing. There were a limited number of pharmacies--with limited supplies of soap, disinfectants, and food supplements to dispense. In his September 1 Report, Dr. Hardy complained that "Delousing, bathing and disinfecting facilities ... are inadequate in all cities we visited."<sup>46</sup>

#### **3.4.4. Disinfecting machines**

To compensate for shortages of soap and disinfectants, bathing and laundry facilities, that were needed in particular to combat typhus, the disinfecting machine was created and put to use in the early 1920s. The disinfecting apparatus at Kozirova was a Japanese model made of oakum that could disinfect 400 items per day.<sup>47</sup> The League of Nations had contributed six big disinfecting machines to the State Soviet Hospital in Minsk which planned to send them to districts.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Minsk *Zvezda*, January 16, 1923, stated that the ARA had "issued more than 50,000 packages" in its year of operation; "the 50,000<sup>th</sup> one" had been "received by ShevelKozianoff of Pichevichi." "Each package" represented "242 meals." "More than 12 million individuals" had "received meals in White Russia through the Food Remittance Program."

<sup>43</sup> Mary Schaeffer Conroy, *The Soviet Pharmaceutical Business during Its First Two Decades: 1917-1937* (Bern, New York: Peter Lang, 2006), 30.

<sup>44</sup> Supplement to August 1922 Report (Vitebsk), Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slide 000234.

<sup>45</sup> Conroy, *The Soviet Pharmaceutical Business*, 36-37.

<sup>46</sup> For hospitals see Hardy, September 1 Report for August, pp. 1-3, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slides 000225-000229. Also, Report on Minsk, April 1, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slides 000340, 000342, 000344, 000345. On poor care of patients by hospital staff, Inspector Roumiantsoff, January 13, 1923, Box 33, Folder 8, Reel 48.

<sup>47</sup> Dr. Whele, July 15, 1922, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slide 000301.

<sup>48</sup> Reconstruction of the State Soviet Hospital, Minsk *Zvezda*, no. 10, January 10, 1923, Box 33, Folder 10, Reel 48..



### **3. 5. Items Contributed by the ARA**

#### **3.5.1. Medicines and Medicinal Botanicals**

Quite obviously the ARA doctorshad their work cut out for them and they played a key role in attempting to improve the health situation in Belarus. Their periodical purchase orders to ARA headquarters in Moscowincluded more than 100chemical and botanical remedies. The most important medicines amongst those requested wereAcidumBoricum, AcidumSalicylicum, Adrenalin Chloride, Aspirin, AmmoniiChloridum, AtropinaeSulphas, Chloriformum, Collodium, Creosolum, CocainaHydrochloridum, HydrargyriChloridum Mite, MorphinaeSulphas, Neosalvarsan, Nitroglycerin, Novococaina, Santoninum, Strychninae,SodiiBicarbonas, Utrotropinum, Phenol, Protorgol, and Formaldehyde Sol.<sup>49</sup>Sera and vaccines on ARA doctors' request lists included Anti-Meningococcal Serum, Diphtheria antitoxin, Tetanus antitoxin, and smallpox vaccine.<sup>50</sup>

#### **3.5.2. Soap, disinfectants, clothing, bedding**

ARA doctors ordered and distributed vast quantities of soap and disinfectants, thousands of pairs of shoes and garments, clothing, bedding, and medical instruments to old people's homes, maternity homes, children's homes, and hospitals.<sup>51</sup>For example,in October 1922 they contributed68 pounds of soap, 5 cans of cod-liver oil, 35 blankets, 75 dressing gowns, 19 mattresses, 72 bandages, 2 thermometers, 4 cans of lye, and cocoa to the "34kids" and seven employees at the model Borisov Colony for Children.<sup>52</sup>ARA doctors gave two disinfectors to Kiev and one each to Gomel', Vitebsk, the camp at Kozirova, and the Epidemic Hospital in Minsk.<sup>53</sup>

#### **3.5.3 Vaccines and Water purification**

ARA doctors inoculated Belarusians with the Tetra vaccine and smallpox vaccine in Gomel' and Vitebsk. Figures were "slow in coming in but from personal observation, Dr. Hardy reported,"it appeared that "all refugees who are to be evacuated have been inoculated." ARA doctors also undertook water purification in Minsk.<sup>54</sup>

### **4. The Fundamental, Underlying Causes of the Public Health Crisis**

#### **4.1 Wars**

ARA physicians attributed the shortages and unhygienic conditions they found in Belarus to six years of war—the First World War, the Civil War of 1917/18-1920, and the Polish-Belarusian-Russian War of 1919-1920. To some extent their assessment was valid. However, the wars cannot be lumped together. Additionally, factors other than armedconflict were greatly responsible for the shortages.

#### **4.1.1. Medicines and domestic items inBelarus before World War I**

On the eve of the First World War,there were 44 private pharmacies in Mogilev city and province, 32 in Gomel' city and province, and 102 in Minsk City and Province.<sup>55</sup>Ferrein in Moscow and approximately 100 other Russian pharmaceutical factories, as cited in their brochures and in*Khimicheskoe delo v Rossii*,(The Chemical Industry in Russia) published in Odessa in 1913,produced soaps, disinfectants, cough syrups, etc.—about half the pharmaceuticalsdispensed in the approximately 4,800 pharmacies and the approximately 10,000 *aptekarshimagaziny* or "drug stores." Thirteen large pharmaceutical factories operated in Riga, Lifland Province, next-door to Belarus.

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<sup>49</sup>Belarusian source: National Archives Republic of Belarusi, Fond 16, opis' 1, delo 6, listy 75-77. ARA Report November 8, 1922, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slides 000143-000145.

<sup>50</sup>Loc cit..Protorgol, Dr. Herz, Minsk, June 8, 1922, Box 182, Folder 2, Reel 238, slides between 000400 and 000495.

<sup>51</sup>Lists of hundreds of Institutions from cities, towns and villages with their addresses, number of inmates, doctors and staff and items distributed were submitted monthly. One example: Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slides 000021-000027.

<sup>52</sup>Inspector Roumiantsoff, January 22, 1923, Box 33, Folder 8, Reel 48.

<sup>53</sup>Dr. Hardy, September 1 Report, 1922, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slide 000229.

<sup>54</sup>Dr. Hardy, loc. cit., slide 000228.

<sup>55</sup>Sosonkina, V. F. *IstoriiafarmatsiiBelarusi*( History of Belarusian Pharmacy) (1918-1941), Minsk, 2016, 14, 16, 17.

There was only one major pharmaceutical company in Belarus--“Lur’e” in Pinsk. However, from 1885 this firm produced Lysol, the disinfectant creolin, and soap—items ARA doctors ordered in 1922 that were crucial to combatting the infectious diseases they were fighting.<sup>56</sup> Russia did import the so-called “magic bullets”—aspirin, the anti-syphilitic Salvarsan, Novocain, Phenacetin, and others—from German and Swiss firms because they held patents for these items and low tariffs made it more economical to import rather than produce domestically. Similarly, Russia imported the disinfectant iodine from Germany and opium from Persia and the Ottoman Empire because the active ingredients in Russian opium poppies and coastal seaweed (a percentage of iodine’s source) did not satisfy the Pharmacopoeia. However, during World War I Russian pharmacologists reverse-engineered key patented items, heretofore imported—notably aspirin, Salvarsan, Novocain, and Pyrimidine. Domestic opium and Black Sea seaweed were used for iodine. Iodine was an important disinfectant. Further, almost 50 percent of soldier’s wounds were to soft tissue. In 1915 M. V. Rostovtsev invented an apparatus that used iodine steam to treat such wounds, an improvement over infusions of iodine. Production of iodine grew exponentially during the war.<sup>57</sup> *Khimicheskoe delo* described other small-scale Belarusian factories that produced useful items such as hemp and glucose, flax oil, vinegar acid, charcoal, wood spirits, methyl alcohol, flour, and salt. There were five leather and shoe factories in Vitebsk, one in Mogilev, and 44 in Grodno.<sup>58</sup> Although Belarus lost Grodno in the subsequent Polish war, had those remaining been operating in 1922, refugee children would have been supplied with shoes at hand without having to wait for shoes from America bestowed by the ARA. Eight institutes produced vaccines for cholera, typhoid and dysentery. And, though ARA doctors ordered cocoa—a mainstay in their feeding of children and hospital patients—and Santonin, from the 1880s Russia had a monopoly on the latter, a vermifuge made from *Artemisia cina* in Chimkent, Central Asia, that was vital to the Illinois hog industry. Finally, the wholesale pharmaceutical firm R. Keler and Company in Moscow sold its proprietary Malton, other food supplements, packets of dried vegetables that required only boiling water to turn them into nutritious soup—a boon for people without kitchen facilities—and deodorants/disinfectants like “Aseptikon”—for banishing “toilet...garbage...and other stench.”<sup>59</sup>

#### **4.1.2 Medicines in Belarus during World War I**

Some of Riga’s pharmaceutical factories were evacuated during the Great War. In any case access to them was severed when Latvia became independent in 1918. Belarus was likewise cut off from pharmaceutical factories in Poland and from the Joint Stock Chemical Company in Vilna that produced Glauber’s salts, fruit essences, nitric acid, and barium<sup>60</sup> when Lithuania declared independence in 1918 and Poland acquired Vilnius in 1922.

For compensation, Belarus was rich in medicinal botanicals—a major export of the Russian Empire even during World War I<sup>61</sup>-- and Belarusians were skilled phytotherapists as the publications of Dr. V.F. Korsun and Dr. E. V. Korsun attest.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>“Minskayaguberniya,” (Minsk Province) *Khimicheskoe delo v Rossii* (Odessa, 1913), column 164.

<sup>57</sup>Conroy, M. S. In *Health and In Sickness: Pharmacy, Pharmacists and the Pharmaceutical Industry in Late Imperial, Early Soviet Russia* (Boulder, CO: 1994), 137-174; Conroy, *The Soviet Pharmaceutical Business*, 29-42.

<sup>58</sup>*Khimicheskoe delo v Rossii*, Vitebsk, cols. 203, 334 ; Minsk, col. 221 ; Mogilev, col. 253 ; albumin factory in Minsk, col. 331; bone, flour, etc. factories in Kovno, col. 334; and Mogilev, col. 335. Leather and shoe factories, in Mogilev, cols. 309-310, in Grodno, cols. 297-300. (Lublinsk, col. 309) Factories in Grodno and Lublinsk were lost to Poland.

<sup>59</sup>Conroy, *The Soviet Pharmaceutical Business*, 11-23; advertisements in Keler, *Preiskurant* (Price Catalog) (July 1914), some reproduced in Conroy, *In Health and In Sickness*, front illustrations.

<sup>60</sup>Information for Riga, *Khimicheskoe delo v Rossii*, cols. 161-164, for Vilna, *ibid.*, col. 154. Information on pharmaceutical factories in Warsaw, Conroy, *In Health and In Sickness*, 146; for wartime evacuation of Polish factories, Maciej Girny, “A Century of Selective Ignorance: Poland. 1918-2018,” *The Slavic Review*, 78 (2019), 3, 659.

<sup>61</sup>The United States imported more medicinal botanicals from the Russian Empire, especially licorice root, spor’yn’e, and club moss, than Russia imported from the United States. These Imports continued during World War I. Conroy, *In Health and In Sickness*, 320-348; Conroy, *The Soviet Pharmaceutical Business*, 38-39.

<sup>62</sup>Korsun, E. V., Malyshko, M. A., Korsun, V. F., Ogrenich, N. A. *Istoriia fitoterapii v Belarusi* (The History of Phytotherapy in Belarus), (Moscow, 2016).

Germans and Russians pummeled parts of Belarus with poison gas during the First World War and the Russian government subordinated agriculture to military needs during the first two years of the war, as Germany did when occupying Belarus from 1916 through 1918.<sup>63</sup>

Peter Gatrell has emphasized the burning of crops and homes, the wasting of horses, cattle and equipment that accompanied the fleeing of inhabitants due to fear or orders from the Russian military—particularly General Ianushkevich.<sup>64</sup>

Nevertheless, Mogilev, headquarters of the Russian army after Tsar Nicholas took command in August 1915, was a viable city until the end of 1916, as evidenced by Nicholas' presence and visits from hemophiliac Tsarevich Alexei, Tsaritsa Alexandra, and the imperial daughters.<sup>65</sup> Further, Sosonkina's *Istoriia farmatsii Belarusi* documents that private warehouses in Mogilev--Provizor A. L. Blokh's established in the 1890s, M. Pazol's workshop of specialized bandages and Provizor Rotshtein's warehouse of pharmacy and perfumes--were available to provision local pharmacies. The warehouses of Provizor O. M. Al'tshul and Sh. Rubinin Minsk were available for local pharmacies there. The wholesale pharmacy warehouse of T. K. Abel' provisioned Gomel', the pharmacy warehouse of L. V. Gal'per did so in Pinsk. In 1915 the All-Russian Union of Zemstvos established a warehouse in Minsk stocked with pharmaceutical and medical supplies for the army and clinics, feeding stations, isolation hospitals, epidemic units, and children's refuges under Zemstvo Union jurisdiction located in Mir, Igumen, Rechitsa, Brest-Litovsk, and other towns. In January 1917--nine months before being sequestered by Bolshevik authorities in the fall of 1917--this warehouse contained more than 200 medical-pharmaceutical items including chemical preparations, disinfecting substances, ointments, solutions, oils, plasters, and dried medicinal botanicals.<sup>66</sup> Thus, medical/pharmaceutical deficits in Belarus 1922 could not be attributed solely or even predominantly to the First World War.

#### **4.2. The Impact of the Civil War and the War with Poland on Belarus**

Economic historians and demographers S. G. Wheatcroft and R. W. Davies have emphasized the high number of civilian deaths during the Civil War in Russia in general as compared with low excess civilian mortality during World War I. Further, they allege that the main cause of civilian deaths was disease. During the First World War they state that approximately 1.6 to 2 million Russian soldiers were killed or died from wounds and disease, but that "in those towns away from the front for which data are available the CDR (civilian death rate) did not increase substantially." During the Civil War, on the contrary, the number of civilian deaths--mainly "from typhus, typhoid, dysentery and cholera"--might have been 11.5 million.<sup>67</sup>

Since the main cause of death during the civil war, according to Wheatcroft and Davies, was disease, we must examine the availability of medicines and medicinal botanicals, soap and disinfectants, hospitals and clinics, laundries and bathhouses, housing and household items-- and infrastructure in general--in Belarus during the Civil War and the War with Poland that followed the First World War.

##### **4.2.1. Loss of factories and workshops, barriers to emigration from Belarus**

The Treaty of Riga, April 1921, that ended the Polish War, allotted Grodno with its shoe factories and pharmacies plus a large chunk of territory to newly independent Poland. Pinsk, with the pharmaceutical factory Lur'e, if it was still operating, also went to Poland. Both independent Poland and Lithuania aggravated the refugee situation in Belarus in other ways. Poland blocked ARA convoys. Lithuania delayed admission of migrants from Belarus.

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<sup>63</sup>Zamoiski, Andrei. "Belarus," *International Encyclopedia of the First World War*, 1-2, <http://encyclopedia.1914-1918-online.net/article/Belarus>, 5 pp, accessed August 5, 2019.

<sup>64</sup>Gatrell, *The Whole World Walking*, 30.

<sup>65</sup>Iroshnikov, M., Protsai, L., Shelayev, Yuri. *Sunset of the Romanov Dynasty*, (Moscow: Tera-Terra, 1992), 318-319. According to Iroshnikov et al, Tsarevich Aleksei visited Stavka frequently.

<sup>66</sup>Sosonkina, V. F. *Farmatsevticheskoe delo v Belarusi: Istoricheskii ocherk*, (Pharmacy Business in Belarus; An Historical Outline) Minsk, 2014, 88.

<sup>67</sup>Wheatcroft, S. G. and Davies, R. W. "Population," in Davies, Harrison. M. and Wheatcroft, eds. *The Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1913-1945*. Cambridge University Press, 1994, 62-64.

In Sebej, the frontier point for evacuation, Dr. Stackelberg noted in July 1922: "...the Lithuanian Govt. [sic] ...often refuse to admit on the grounds of papers, which may be in order, not being that of the bearer who must give full information as to his home address, etc. and whether he speaks Lithuanian. This falls heavily on the Jews."<sup>68</sup>

#### **4.2. 2. Political instability**

The civil war in Belarus caused turmoil in Belarus. Belarus lost independence, declared by the liberal *Rada* in the spring of 1918. Belarusian liberals and anti-Bolshevik socialists were harshly subordinated to Bolsheviks in Belarus and in Moscow. Belarusian historian Elvira Yershovahas detailedthe political chaoswrought by the civil war in Belarus in her article "*Grazhdanskaiavoinaibor'ba za vlast'vBelorussii*,"(The Civil War and Struggle for Power in Belarus) 1918-1920."<sup>69</sup>The strongest force opposing the Bolsheviks, according to Yershova, was the Belarusian *Rada*, which united various parties and groups under the leadership of the Revolutionary Democrats. She contends that the program of the *Rada* closely resembled that of the Provisional Government in Petrograd that took over government ministries after forcing Tsar Nicholas II to abdicate. The *Rada* wasthe champion of Belarusian independence. Yershova avers thatits support came from middle and upper classes in Minsk, Gomel', Mogilev, Mozyr, and Borisov. Bemporad'sbrief discussion of the civil war in Minsk aligns with Yershova's. She alsodescribes how Jews in Minsk petitioned Soviet authorities not to requisition their businesses,their stigma and sufferingas former "exploiters", andsupport for the anti-Bolshevik Jewish Bund.<sup>70</sup>

Minsk Bolsheviks, in contrast, aligned with Bolsheviks in Russia proper and opposed Belarusian independence. Simultaneous with the Bolshevik takeover in Petrograd October 24/25, Minsk Bolsheviks organized the Executive Committee of the Minsk Soviet of Worker and Soldier deputiesand a Revolutionary Regiment or Praetorian Guard to maintain the executive committee. Soldiers and under-officers who had been imprisoned for opposition to Tsar Nicholas' prosecution of the World War formed the core of the regiment.Belarusian Bolsheviks also organized a "Military-Revolutionary Committee of the Northwestern Region."This body had six departments: military, economic, supply, organization and connection, mandates and informational. The Soviet of Worker-Soldier Deputies recognized itself as "the temporary organ responsible for establishing Soviet power"and arrogated to itself "the struggle with counterrevolution in Vilna, Vitebsk, Mogilev provinces and the Western front." The Soviet organized a government of ministries (commissariats) under the leadership of one Miasnikiiian, whose revolutionary pseudonym was Miasnikov, that was expected to follow dictates from "SovNarKom", the central Russian government in Petrograd—relocated to Moscow in the winter of 1918.<sup>71</sup>

The Belarusian *Rada* refused to recognize the Bolshevik takeover in October-November 1917 and organized a Belarusian Congress in Minsk and March 9, 1918 that proposed formation of a Belarusian People's Republic. On March 25, 1918, the Executive Committee elected by the Congress formerly declared the independence of Belarus from Soviet Russia and proceeded to establish an anti-Bolshevik Belarusian government. One supporter of the *Rada* and Belarusian independence was theBelarusian Socialist *Gromada*, a party that, before 1917, pursued a vague goal of democratization and, according to Yershova was akin to theprogressive-left People's Party that operated in Russia proper.After the Liberal Revolution of February-March 1917, the *Gromada*split into a right wing that, like socialists who joined the Provisional Government in Petrograd in the spring of 1917,wanted to postpone independence for peripheral national minorities in the Russian Empire while the world war raged, and aleft wing that continued to strive for Belarusian independence. A second affiliate of the *Rada* was the Belarusian Regional Committee of Peasant deputies (BOK). The headquarters of BOK, established in Petrograd in November 1917, was similarto the Socialist Revolutionary (SR) party led by Victor Chernov.

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<sup>68</sup>Dr. Stackelberg, July 13, 1922, pp. 1-2. Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slides 000258, 000259. A report in October 1922 noted that Poland would no longer admit ARA convoys. Box 182, Folder 2, Reel 238, slide 000776.

<sup>69</sup>All information on political developments in Belarus from Yershova, "*Grazhdanskaiavoinaibor'ba za vlast' v Belarussii*"(Internet version (without footnotes), <http://www.pergaspi.ru/publikatsii/konferentsii/grazhdanskaya-vojna-a-vostoke-rossii...> Copy of article with footnotes from Yershova in possession of the author.

<sup>70</sup>Bemporad, *Becoming Soviet Jews*, 25-28, 31-40, 51-73.

<sup>71</sup>Yershova, "*Grazhdanskaiavoina...v Belarusi*," 1.

After the October Revolution, the right wing of the BOK like the right SRs was anti-Bolshevik and championed Belarusian independence whereas the left wing gave allegiance to the Bolsheviks and “self-liquidated.”<sup>72</sup> The government established by the Belarusian *Rada* was hampered in its efforts to administer and maintain the independent People’s Republic of Belarus not only by machinations of Belarusian Bolsheviks but by German occupation in parts of Belarus following the treaty of Brest-Litovsk of March 3, 1918, and a conflict with Poland that broke out in 1918. The *Rada* government’s telegram to Kaiser Wilhelm urging recognition of Belarusian independence was rebuffed as were overtures to Josef Pilsudski, leader of newly independent Poland, asking for recognition of Belarus not under German occupation. Indeed, Pilsudski began an offensive in areas of Belarus deemed historically Polish—the so-called “Borders of 1772.” Partisans under one Talashe engaged in skirmishes against both Germans and Poles. They were not sympathetic to the *Rada* and after the Polish War in 1921 went to Moscow. While the German occupation ended in November 1918, the war with Poland led to loss of Belarusian independence. Indeed, Belarus needed assistance from the Red Army. In December 1918 a Belarusian Communist Party was established in Moscow. It was tasked with establishing “self-determination” for Belarus. The Party elected a Central Bureau, headed by Belarusian poet Dmitrii Zhilunovich as Chair. He was a National Democrat and apparently tried to achieve autonomy for Belarus. However, Belarusian A. F. Miasnikov and D. G. Gorin, Belarusian Bolsheviks sympathetic to Moscow, competed with Zhilunovich—with the support of Stalin, Commissar of Nationalities. During 1919 Miasnikov replaced Zhilunovich as chair of the Belarusian Council of People’s Commissars and Belarus passed under Moscow’s control.<sup>73</sup>

#### **4.2.3. Destruction of infrastructure**

The amount of devastation in Belarus resulting from the civil war and the Belarusian-Russian-Polish conflict remains murky. The Bolsheviks ruthlessly suppressed upheavals in Yaroslavl’ in the summer of 1918 as photos and archival documents in 1992, 1994 editions of *Yaroslavskaiastarina* (Yaroslavl of the Past) attest.<sup>74</sup> According to Drs. Stackelberg and Hardy the hospital in the Jewish town of Mozyr was destroyed when Bolsheviks crushed a “White Russian rising” in 1920.<sup>75</sup> It is not clear whether the destruction of the hospital in Kalinkovitchi, Belarus,<sup>76</sup> also resulted from marauding armies.

#### **4. 2. 4. The policy of “War Communism”**

The Bolshevik policy of War Communism, though, was clearly detrimental to health care. Historians have shown that businesses continued under the Bolshevik policy of War Communism—confiscation of banks, bank accounts, businesses, and other property—albeit they operated under state ownership rather than private ownership. For example, in *A Social History of Soviet Trade: Trade Policy, Retail Practices, and Consumption, 1917-1953* (Princeton, 2004) Julie Hessler describes chaos and hardship for consumers and traders resulting from Bolshevik sequestration of private shops but notes that retail trade continued nonetheless. Similarly, although sympathetic to the plight of Jewish business owners dispossessed by the Bolsheviks, Bemporad’s depiction of the impact of the requisitions on the macroeconomy in *Becoming Soviet Jews* is cavalier.

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<sup>72</sup>Yershova, *ibid.*, p. 2. Members of the Left BOK were proclaimed “enemies of the state” during Stalin’s purges of the 1930s. Gattrell refers to the power struggle between the Bolsheviks and the “nationalist coalition” in Belarus in one brief paragraph, noting that under German occupation a puppet government under one A. S. Skirmont ruled and that Belarusian refugees in Moscow bitterly denounced the Peace of Brest-Litovsk, now realizing that they were [sic] “Belorussians.” *The Whole World Walking*, p. 184.

<sup>73</sup>Yershova, *loc. cit.* Developments in Belarus paralleled developments in Georgia detailed by Ronald Grigor Suny, *The Making of the Georgian Nation*, (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, Stanford: Hoover Institution Press,) 1988, 185-240 although it is unclear whether reprisals were as harsh in Belarus as in Georgia.

<sup>74</sup>V. N. Kozliakov, “Grazhdane! Teper’ vam vse miasno, ktotakie Bol’sheviki...”, *Yaroslavskayastarina*, 1992, 40-43 and “Listovki Iaroslavskogovosstaniia 1918 goda (novyepostupleniia v Iaroslavskii muzei-zapovednik iz zarkhiva KGB),” *ibid.*, 1994, 1, 52, 54.

<sup>75</sup> Dr. Stackelberg, July 13, 1922, 10, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slide 000267.

<sup>76</sup> Dr. Stackelberg, July 13, 1922, 1-2, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, Slides 000258-259.

On the other hand, the Bolsheviks' seizure of pharmaceutical factories, pharmacies and ancillary production units under the policy of War Communism combined with their suppression of private trade in medicines and medicinal botanicals clearly curtailed the containment and eradication of infectious diseases, treatment of chronic health problems, and maintenance of public health. The policy of War Communism ruined pharmaceutical factories, thus decimating supplies of soap, disinfectants, medicines, and medical items in the heartland of Russia from 1918—and in the borderlands of Ukraine and Belarus by 1921. Moscow—the capital of Soviet Russia from 1918—was the hub of the pharmaceutical industry. Thirty-two pharmaceutical companies operated there, producing soap and disinfectants, as well as other medicines of the time. Important pharmaceutical factories operated in Petersburg and nearly every other province in European Russia and Ukraine, with many new ones founded during the war. The Bolsheviks requisitioned large pharmaceutical factories in Petersburg and Moscow from February 1918, while locals seized those in the provinces. The factories were handed over to party stalwarts, most of whom had no pharmacological or business qualifications, or remained without management for years, with resultant deterioration of machinery and stock—and shortages of pharmaceutical and medical supplies.

Declaring Mensheviks' municipalization of pharmacies "too chaotic", Bolsheviks also sequestered the 4,800 or so pharmacies in the Empire and the approximately 10,000 *aptekarskie- magaziny* or "drug stores" along with other shops and commercial entities. Many former factory and pharmacy owners left Russia; others were incarcerated in camps, some were killed, none could legally manage their properties—precipitating a brain-drain. Layers of bureaucracy and endless meetings, detailed in reports residing in the Russian State Archive of the Economy in Moscow, stifled innovation and blocked efficient distribution of pharmaceuticals.<sup>77</sup> The preiskurant of the Chemical-Pharmaceutical firm of the former R. Keler and Company in 1923, renamed Semashko, was pathetically puny as compared with the impressive and lavishly illustrated preiskurant of R. Keler and Company in July 1914 on the eve of World War I.

Similarly, confiscation of agricultural produce for the Red Army and abortive attempts to collectivize caused peasant upheavals, shrank food on the market and also destroyed cultivation and collection of medicinal botanicals, heavily used in medical therapies in the early twentieth century.<sup>78</sup> Research on medicinal botanicals published in 1914, as listed in the Utkin Bibliography of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, 1957, amounted to 51 articles and books. In 1915 the number of works researching medicinal botanicals and the domestic acquisition of iodine and opium for therapies in wartime swelled to 149. In 1916, 139 publications discussed Russian home remedies, the collection and cultivation of plants, and the acquisition of iodine and opium. In 1917 there were 86 publications on these subjects. In 1918, however, during the civil war, there were only 20 publications, in 1919 there were 17, and in 1920 there were only nine.<sup>79</sup>

#### **4.2.5. Ukraine under German vs Soviet administration**

Comparison of the pharmaceutical situation in Ukraine under German administration in 1918 with Soviet dominated Russia provides a case study of the deleterious effects of War Communism. Ukraine was rent asunder by multiple antagonistic groups during the civil war.

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<sup>77</sup>For nationalization of pharmacies see Conroy, In Health and In Sickness, 399-417, 421-443. For nationalization of pharmaceutical factories see Conroy, The Soviet Pharmaceutical Business, 47-73. For attacks against business owners see Conroy, M. S. "Health Care in Prisons, Labour and Concentration Camps in early Soviet Russia, 1918-1921," *Europe-Asia Studies*, 2000, 52, 7, 1257-1274.

<sup>78</sup> Conroy, The Soviet Pharmaceutical Business, 58. Some 2,400 pharmacies operated in Russian cities in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with only some 1,800 pharmacies operating in the country villages where 80 percent of the population lived. Rural dwellers relied on *narodnaia meditsina*, (popular medicine) the core of which was medicinal botanicals. Rural dwellers also often made their own soap from animal carcasses plus purchased additives. During the civil war cities were depleted, and urbanites fleeing to the countryside also needed medicinal botanicals. Cultivation stopped "because of the need to produce foodstuffs and because of contraction of the market," hurting Soviet exports as well as usage by the population.

<sup>79</sup>Utkin, A. A. ,Gammerman, A. F., Nevskii, V. A., *Bibliografiia po lekarstvennim rasteniiam* (Bibliography of medicinal plants). Moscow-Leningrad: Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1957, 311-340.

However, under German domination in 1918 the pharmaceutical sector operated in orderly fashion and medicines and medical supplies “from the best German and Austrian firms” as well as from Ukrainian workshops were available—in stark contrast to the situation in “Soviet Russia.” Private enterprise prevailed, labor-management clashes were resolved, and pharmacists continued to take their examinations.<sup>80</sup>

Belarusian pharmaceutical historian Valentina Sosonkina details how War Communism harmed the health sector in Belarus. During the German occupation of Belarus in 1918, nationalization was reversed—then re-imposed when Germany was defeated.<sup>81</sup> She emphasizes how trained pharmacists could work in pharmacies but were barred from owning them. At the end of 1922 the number of pharmacies in Belarus had shrunk to 105—about the number operating in Minsk city and province during the First World War.<sup>82</sup> Pharmaceutical/medical supplies in private warehouses and the Zemgor Warehouse disappeared. Suppression of Jewish philanthropic institutions also negatively impacted health care.<sup>83</sup>

In sum, it would seem incontrovertible that depletion of pharmaceutical and ancillary supplies under War Communism was greatly responsible for the enormous spike in mortality rates in Soviet Russia between 1918 and 1920—as compared with the low excess mortality in the Russian Empire during the first three years of World War I. Wanton killing may also have contributed to increased mortality in Belarus. However, the epidemics erupting from population movements definitely caused deaths. And these epidemics, in turn, could not be quelled without products produced in pharmaceutical factories or made up in pharmacies from raw materials produced domestically or imported. Also needed were functioning laundries, bathhouses, clothing and shoe ateliers and shops, functioning food shops and markets, and proper dwellings.<sup>84</sup> These were suppressed or shrank under the regime of War Communism and international trade in pharmaceuticals also faltered.<sup>85</sup>

## **5. The New Economic Policy or NEP**

The New Economic Policy, implemented in Belarus in 1922, revived agriculture and production to some extent. However, ironically, the NEP had baneful effects on the pharmaceutical and medical sector in Belarus. Pharmacies and bathhouses were leased to individuals.

Private hospitals “of special character” also were allowed.<sup>86</sup> But contrary to the early days of Soviet power when health care and education was to be free for all, the cold financial reality of the NEP forced

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<sup>80</sup>Conroy, In Health and In Sickness, 418-419. Information from articles and advertisements in *Iuzhni vestnik aptekhnogotruda* (Southern News of Pharmaceutical Trade), 1918.

<sup>81</sup>Sosonkina, *Istoriia farmatsii Belarusi*, 8-37.

<sup>82</sup>Sosonkina, *ibid.*, 39.

<sup>83</sup> Transfer of Jewish children’s homes to the local Belarusian government is referred to in this article. Closure of Jewish schools and struggles between Jews over return of synagogues (as well struggles on the part of Catholics for return of their churches) are cited in note 96, below.

<sup>84</sup>Some 2 million of the 15 million men mobilized were felled by typhus, typhoid, croupous inflammation of the lungs, malaria, TB, hepatitis, and sepsis complicating war wounds. Conroy, *The Soviet Pharmaceutical Business*, 31-32. However, according to Wheatcroft and Davies, to repeat, , abnormal civilian deaths were minimal and “the population actually increased between 1914-1917 by an estimated 2.6-4.7 million.” “The population deficit was concentrated into the years after 1917.” “According to Danilov,” the authors state, “excess deaths from famine and diseases amounted to eight million persons in 1918-1920.” Wheatcroft and Davies, “Population,” in Davies, Harrison, and Wheatcroft, eds. *The Economic Transformation of the Soviet Union, 1915-1945.* , 61-64.

Tumanova and Gatrell recount how civic and government organizations relied on functioning infrastructure to succor refugees during World War I in their works cited in note six above. On Zemgor hospitals to combat infectious diseases during World War I, see Thomas Earl Porter with Lawrence W. Lerner, Prince George E. L’vov (Lanham, Boulder: Lexington Books, 2017). For just one example, during the civil war, in contrast, Mary McAuley documents how housing declined in Petrograd when Bolsheviks, fulfilling promises to “have not” constituents, doled out private residences to them. See *Bread and Justice: State and Society in Petrograd, 1917-1922* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991).

<sup>85</sup>On international trade in medicinal botanicals during the civil war see Conroy, *The Soviet Pharmaceutical Business*, 58-61. Some exchange of pharmaceuticals with the United States continued but Soviet Russia blocked exports of Santonin, desperately needed by the American hog industry.

<sup>86</sup>Sosonkina, *Ibid.*, 38. Also, “Pomoch’ detiam,” (help to Children) *Minsk Zvezda*, no. 29, February 6, 1923, Box 33, Folder 8, Reel 48.

Soviet citizens to pay for prescriptions and for food in hospitals. *Narkomzdravin* Moscow devolved responsibility for hospitals to the Belarusian *Narkomzdrav* which did not have adequate funds.<sup>87</sup> Hence, Dr. Hardy noted, "Patients, as a rule, are taken into hospital with the understanding that they furnish their own food. Naturally many of them are unable to do this."<sup>88</sup> Some towns had no public baths but in cities where public baths existed some had been privatized and, in order to pay taxes during the NEP now charged for usage. For example, Dr. Stackelberg commented that in Minsk, "Public baths and washhouses...do not come under control of the Health Dept. as yet, and one has been rented for private exploitation. The second, which I visited, is working 3 times a week for baths, and has three classes, being of Roman and Russian pattern, and old, it needed whitewash and paint but is satisfactory. The public pay, [although] school children go free." He tried to arrange bathing for the "German refugees still in the town" but they were under the purview of their Red Cross. Further, illustrating social and political hierarchies that reigned during the NEP, he added that in Minsk: "Military bath. This was better, with separate bath for officers, and for troops there are two groups, one has a hot air chamber disinfectant, the other a proper camera [i. e. room]. Adjoined is a hot air drying chamber."<sup>89</sup>

## **6. Recruiting for Immigration to North America**

The Communist newspaper *Minsk Zvezda* noted that American and Canadian steamship lines' recruitment of refugees for immigration to North America offered one solution to the health crisis in Belarus.<sup>90</sup> But, obviously, this escape route was open to only a few Belarusians who had funds and relatives to sponsor them. Thus, for the vast majority of Belarusians, ARA medical help was crucial.

## **7. Summary of ARA Help by Belarusian Authorities**

*Minsk Zvezda* acknowledged January 16, 1923 that along with issuing 2, 997, 519 rations per day since January 1922, the ARA had supplied 103 institutions in Minsk district, 22 in Bobruisk, 18 in Igumen, 23 in Slutsk, and 16 in Borisov "with drugs, medicines...vaccines, surgical instruments, hospital supplies," indeed "49 carloads of supplies valued at 3,000,000 gold rubles."<sup>91</sup>

## **8. The Health Situation in Belarus in 1923**

ARA doctors' reports and those of Dr. Roumiantsoff documented some improvements by 1923. For example, Belarusian Inspector Roumiantsoff noted that Hospital No. 1 in Borisov district was in a better state due to ARA help. The hospital could accommodate 60 patients; there were 32 when he inspected it in mid-January. The hospital had received 68 rations from the ARA that month. It should be noted that the meals Roumiantsoff recounted were typical of those doled out to children's homes, hospitals, and other institutions—sometimes supplemented by market purchases—as documented in the hundreds of ARA reports and tables. In the morning patients at Hospital No. 1 in Borisov received cocoa and white bread, soup plus meat for dinner, meat plus porridge for supper, and bread before sleep." Food remaining was kept in the storeroom. The ARA also had supplied 30 pairs of slippers, 40 sheets, including 5 India rubber ones, 50 blankets, 20 men's suits.<sup>92</sup> And these items also were distributed to a hundred or more other institutions.

Nevertheless, as the ARA was preparing to wind up its mission, many Belarusians were still in need. For example, an ARA report on the Home for Invalids in Minsk for mid-January 1923 noted that several of the 31 invalids were ill with infectious diseases but there was no room for them in the hospital. The 10 rooms in which they were quartered were in "a disgraceful condition—with little heat." They were "taken to the public bath" only "once per month because of [lack of] bed linen." The ARA gave the home food, bed

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<sup>87</sup> Dr. Hardy, Medical-Sanitary Report July 31, 1922, Box 182, Folder 2, Reel 238, slide 000164.

<sup>88</sup> Dr. Hardy, September 1, 1922, Box 184, Folder 2, 1, Reel 240, slide 000225.

<sup>89</sup> Dr. Stackelberg, July 13, 1922, Box 184, Folder 2, Reel 240, slides: page 13, slide 000270. An ARA report for Vitebsk from May 27, 1923 referred to high taxes on private businesses in Belarus, noting that "the heavy tax on merchandise causes many merchants to close their stores." Boxes 147-148, Folder 7, Reel 193, slide 000244.

<sup>90</sup> "How Do repatriates Get to America," articles translated from *Minsk Zvezda*, January 15-31, 1923, 3, Box 33, Reel 48; *Minsk Zvezda*, January 18, 1923, Box 33, Reel 48; "After normalization of the postal service with America, the population of White Russia has received from relatives in America about 10,000 tickets and affidavits [to emigrate]," *Minsk Zvezda*, no. 17, January 21, 1923, Box 33, Folder 8, Reel 48.

<sup>91</sup> Box 33, Reel 48.

<sup>92</sup> Inspector Roumiantsoff, January 13, 1923, Box 33, Reel 48.



linen, and seven blankets.<sup>93</sup> Inspector Roumiantsoff described one hospital in the village of Boshitze, 17 versts (about 17 kilometers) from Borisov, with a capacity for 12 patients. Only four were there—all suffering from “eruptive typhus.” The buildings were “nice looking on the outside” but “dilapidated inside. Wood stoves” were “heated every second day.” The stoves in the kitchen were “completely out of repair. Meals for patients “were “prepared in the doctor’s house.” There were two baths but “they cannot be heated.” The “toilet cannot be used at all” it needed “to be cleaned but nobody” could “be found to do it.” “Patients lie on filthy sheets—particularly one wretched woman with a two-year-old baby.” “The housekeeper—out of hearing of the patient said—“if she would die—why bother.” There were almost no medicines in the hospital.” At another hospital in Boshitze 225 people had come to be treated; there were 16 patients at the time of the inspection. There were six employees plus a doctor, housekeepers and “nurses in training. Servants were supposed to wash the linen but none of these things were properly done.” The hospital had new linen but the housekeeper did not use it for fear that “washing would spoil it” and “the patients” did “not appreciate it. The food came from the Borisov Uzdrav but” it was “irregular. Flour was last received in October [1922—i. e. three months ago]. 10 pounds of grits and 10 pounds of sugar were got in December, 60 pounds of fats in October. Part of food remains.”<sup>94</sup> In January 1923, Dr. Whele was still requesting Atropin sulfate tablets, Chloroform, Cocaine hydrochloride tablets and 283 tubes [thereof], Ether, 300 tabs. [and] Morphine sulphate. Whele’s orders testified to ongoing shortages of pharmaceuticals in the Soviet Union. His orders of children’s gowns, jackets, pajamas, pillowcases, towels and materials for hospitals likewise testified to sluggish domestic production of basic household and personal items.<sup>95</sup> Indeed, in 1925 in the Soviet Union smallpox cases were still registered at 11, 784 (0.9 per 10,000 of the population) whereas in Germany the percentage was 0.003 per 10,000, 62, 669 typhus cases were still reported—5.22 per 10,000 whereas there were only 3 cases in Germany; typhoid cases in the USSR amounted to 145,965—12.16 per 10,000 of the population whereas in Germany typhoid cases amounted to only 2.8 per 10,000. Dysentery cases in the Soviet Union in 1925 were registered at 126,917 or 10.57 per 10,000 of the population compared to 0.75 per 10,000 in Germany. Germany did record more diphtheria cases in 1925 than the Soviet Union—6.09 per 10,000 versus 5.25 per 10,000 of the population in the USSR.<sup>96</sup>

The ARA doctors’ work caused stress, even illness,<sup>97</sup> as reflected in their personal requests for comfort items—Gold Flake and Camel Cigarettes, tins of sardines, Palmolive soap, and coffee.<sup>98</sup> But their distribution of food and clothing—in addition to medicines and medical supplies—literally meant the differences between life and death for many Belarusians. Translated heartfelt and poignant thank-you letters in the Hoover Archives from “workless” and sick Belarusians document the commitment of ARA doctors in Belarus.<sup>99</sup>

## **9. Conclusions**

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<sup>93</sup>“First Complete Inspection of City Homes,” January 1-15, 1923, Box 33, Folder 10, Reel 48.

<sup>94</sup>Box 33, Folder 8, Reel 48.

<sup>95</sup> Dr. Whele to Medical Division, Minsk, January 16, 1923, 2-11; Box 184, Folder 2, Reel e40, near slide 000100.

<sup>96</sup>Source: seramumo\_inf\_ligoma\_polyginimas\_1925-1-28 sent me by Dt. Vilma Gudiene, Kaunas Lithuania. The percentage of smallpox cases were higher in Great Britain, which might have given Belarusians *schadenfreude* as the German Empress Catherine the Great had, after all, pioneered smallpox inoculation in Russia, using her son Paul as an example.

<sup>97</sup>A letter to the ARA office in Moscow May 14, 1922 stated that Dr. Hardy was sick and run down because of “living conditions and lack of proper food.” He had tonsillitis and difficulty swallowing ...a rash on his legs, and had lost weight.” Box 181, Folder 2, reel 238, slide 000602.

<sup>98</sup>Letter of June 29, 1922, Box 181, Folder 2, Reel 238, slide 364. The letter also related the “urgent” dental needs of the doctors of Belarus.

<sup>99</sup>Many letters were written and translated in January 1923, the one-year anniversary of the ARA’s mission in Belarus. They gave the names and addresses of the writers. Two letters came from destitute army veterans; three came from nurses who—oddly—given the medical crisis in Belarus, were out of work; several letters came from impoverished widows of various ages, some supporting children; one came from an orphan who was supporting siblings; one came from a student who criticized the problems in Belarus; two came from Jews thrown out of work because of closure of Jewish schools; three came from Orthodox Christians. Box 33, Reel 48. Jewish workers fought successfully to re-acquire their synagogues for “cultural purposes”; Catholic Poles were attempting to do the same—but without success. A Catholic priest appealed to the ARA to send a letter telling of the plight of the Catholic Church in Belarus. Minsk *Zvezda*, no. 40, February 19, 1923; no. 42, February 21, 1923, February 24, 1923. Letters and newspaper article in Box 33, Reel 48.

The parallels between the situation in Belarus in 1922 and 1923 and current conditions resulting from COVID-19 are obvious. The “Spanish Flu” pandemic has been much discussed but lesser surges of infectious diseases like the typhus epidemic on the Eastern Front during World War I wreaked havoc as well.<sup>100</sup> The efforts of the ARA and Belarusian officials had mixed results. For years afterward, poor Belarus was beleaguered by typhus, typhoid, and other epidemics. These were spawned by wars, population movements, and misguided government economic policies. In the opinion of the American author, the experiences of Belarusian officials and ARA doctors in fighting epidemics in Belarus in 1922 and 1923 show the pitfalls of a government monopoly on healthcare and the pharmaceutical industry.

### **Materials and Methods:**

The American author brings to the topic her previous research in Russian archives and pharmaceutical journals and books of the period plus current investigations into ARA medical reports on microfilm from the Hoover Institute Archives at Stanford, California, USA.

The Belarusian author contributes her research into Belarusian archives published in her two books and current investigations into the ARA and pharmacists in Belarusian archives

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<sup>100</sup>“Typhus of the Eastern Front” by Frederick Holmes, MD, Professor of Medicine Emeritus and of the History of Medicine, University of Kansas School of Medicine, contains four posters in Cyrillic from the Wellcome Library in London. See also Joseph M. Conlon, LCDR, MSC, USN “The Historical Impact of Epidemic Typhus,” that provides extensive bibliography. (No URL in my copies).